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By JERRY GREENE

Washington, July 22—The current rash of "inside" accounts of government indecision and ineptitude during the disastrous Bay of Pigs affair in April, 1961, must inevitably cast a foreboding shadow over the grim proceedings now under way at the White House.

Some of the characters involved now were involved then. The citizens can only hope that lessons have been learned and that the endless conferences will produce improvement in judgments.

After an extended, Madison Avenue kind of publicity buildup stretching the public nerves for the last 10 days, President Johnson is huddling with the best advisers the government can offer to make the new and serious decisions which must certainly commit tens of thousands more American troops to the war in Viet Nam.

The deliberations began yesterday after Defense Secretary Robert McNamara returned from Saigon. They probably will go into tomorrow. It is believed likely that when the fateful decisions have been reached, Johnson will call Congressional leaders to the White House for a "briefing," then immediately release the tough news to the public—the figures on how many men are needed, and when.

This could come tomorrow, or no later than Saturday. Then, on Monday or Tuesday, if one timetable holds, the President would send a special message to Congress asking for specific authority to mobilize the reserves and for general backing in his war planning for at least the next six months.

The President has been told that the Army wants 400,000 men in South Viet Nam, believing a force this size is required to "stabilize" the situation.

Best betting among knowledgeable members of Congress is that the Administration will find that the deployment of 250,000 men through next January should be sufficient to stave off the Communist Viet Cong and allow the South Viet Nameese army to get on with a bit more pacification.

Advisers Remember Last Reserves Snafu

Gen. William Westmoreland, the U.S. commander in Saigon, asked for an additional seven or eight squadrons of USAF fighter-bombers, and he may get five or six.

Word seeping around Congress is that the President would like to restrict the mobilizations of reserves to the call-up of one National Guard division plus assorted smaller reserve units which would equal a second division in total strength.

Final decisions were still in the offing. The mobilization would not be done lightly or too hastily and without sufficient preparation. Among the White House deliberators, McNamara, Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Presidential adviser McGeorge Bundy could claim at least psychic wound stripes from the Bay of Pigs fiasco and the messy reserves' uproar over the partial mobilization after the Berlin Wall was built.

They don't want to avoid local turmoil nearly as much as does Lyndon Johnson, a close observer of the previous affairs who, surprisingly, has not yet been mentioned as a confidant or adviser of the harried conferees in the dark spring of 1961.



Gen. William Westmoreland
Wants more fighter-bombers

Mystery of Johnson's Exclusion From War Councils

This fact, too, is peculiar: The failure, if indeed there was one—and these "inside" accounts have odd gaps—of the late President Kennedy to bring Johnson into the Cuban war councils.

The President's loud and hearty attention to his Great Society during the last year has caused many to overlook a touch of history. Johnson has been one of the keenest students of military affairs in Congress, and he knows where more bodies are buried at the Pentagon than the last Army promotion board. He was long a member of the old House Naval Affairs Committee, No. 1 student of Chairman Carl Vinson (D-Ga.), and later was a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Back in 1950, Johnson's blast at the condition of the nation's defenses brought an investigation, which he headed, and creation of the Senate Armed Services Preparedness subcommittee, which he ran like a drill sergeant. One might mention that as preparedness chairman, he hired a young lawyer named Cyrus Vance as an assistant counsel. Vance is now deputy defense secretary and has not exactly been out of touch with LBJ since he went to the Pentagon in January, 1961.

Action May Add to Pressure on North Viet Nam

It is impossible to overestimate the seriousness of the White House talks and the decisions forthcoming shortly, and it is perhaps well that these affairs are being handled under a deliberately focused spotlight.

This has the disadvantage of tipping the Communists, to some extent. But the advertisement of intentions might add to the pressure on North Viet Nam to call off the dogs before it is too late and, perhaps, a world is aflame.

Certainly anything, almost, would be an improvement over the Bay of Pigs hocus-pocus, where the late President Kennedy seems to have been ill-advised and misled. Theodore Sorensen, the JFK speech writer, and Arthur Schlesinger Jr. are out in published versions of that fiasco, as is Richard Bissell, the former CIA man who was tagged as scapegoat.

The new reviews of failure don't add much in terms of fact. There still remains some loose handling of participation by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Two members appear to have proffered written approval of one invasion plan or another.

But nowhere, so far as can be determined, has there been evidence that the JCS ever sat down and worked over a war plan which involved the nation's honor. That would have stopped the Bay of Pigs.

This lesson, at least, has been learned. The JCS was at the White House today.